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A  
LETTER  
TO  
Mr. Fleetwood.

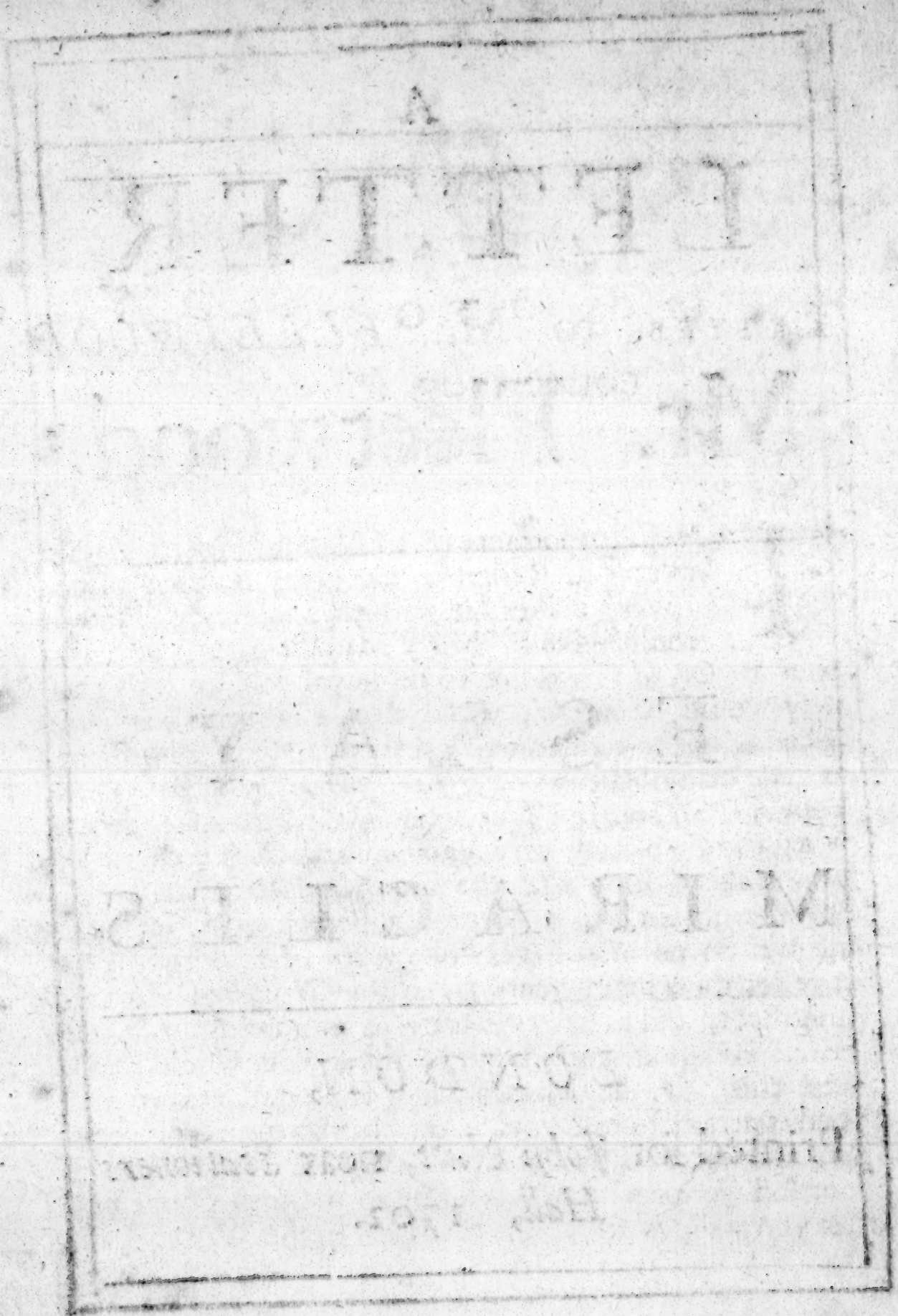
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Occasion'd by his late  
ESSAY  
ON  
MIRACLES.

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LETTER

OF THE

AMERICAN

REPUBLIC

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

AND

THE

WEST INDIES



A

LETTER to Mr. *FLEETWOOD*  
concerning *Miracles*.

S I R,

**T**HE Importance of this Subject (as it nearly relates to Religion, the great Business of our Lives) makes me wish that all serious Persons could agree in their Thoughts and Notions about it: Or, if this is not to be hop'd for, at least that they would be careful, while they establish their own Scheme, not to condemn all others who differ from them, as advancing Schemes *utterly inconsistent with the maintenance of Christianity*. This is not of the best consequence, when the Case is not very *apparent*, and we should rather be willing to show that the same Satisfaction may possibly be obtain'd in a Method different from our own: tho' we do not our selves follow it. The Proofs You have for these many years given the World of a sound Judgment, and a hearty Design of promoting true and serious Religion, forbid me to think you would have done this, if the Matter had not seem'd *evident* beyond contradiction to you. And that Sweetness of Temper, and sincere Love of Truth that are remarkable in your last performance, leave me no room to doubt but that you will, with all the readiness in the World, pardon.

don me, if I interrupt you a little; and endeavour, in the best way I can, to represent the Matter so to you, as to oblige you to return to your Enquiries into this Subject, and examine once more, whether you ought to reject all Schemes contrary to your own, as you do. This I should be induc'd to do for my own private Satisfaction: But the reason why I do it in this manner is, because very many, I believe, have been, and are daily, taught to embrace the Notions you condemn; and, you know, it is fit, if they can be defended, something should be said for the satisfaction of such Persons; or, if they cannot, it should be demonstrated with so great Evidence before their Eyes, that their Judgments may not be left in suspence, or undetermin'd in so concerning a Matter; which I do not think it is yet.

The two principal Things in which I find my self obliged to differ from you, and which are the Foundation of all our other Differences, are these,

I. That none but God can work a *True Miracle*.

II. That it cannot be suppos'd that a *True Miracle*, or a Work which we cannot distinguish from a *True Miracle*, has been, or may be, ever wrought in opposition to any Doctrine or Pretence establish'd, or to be establish'd upon *True Miracles*. And you often declare, and insinuate, that the Argument for Religion taken from *Miracles* can be defended on no other Foundation. I shall beg leave therefore,

I. To represent a *Scheme* to you contrary to your own; not according to my own Sentiments only, but, as I have reason to think, according to those of several learned and judicious Persons; And,



II. To show that this *Scheme* may be maintain'd without the least prejudice to *Truth* or *Religion*. After which, I hope you will pardon me, if I endeavour to make it appear,

III. That the Reasons you have already given for rejecting all other *Schemes*, and advancing your own, are not sufficient.

But, before I begin, it is necessary for me to præmise, that I mean by *Miracles*, the *same* Works, or Works of the *same* Nature, with those done by *Moses* and *Christ*, which the *Scripture* and we call *Miracles*. This is no false Step in the Dispute between us, because we both acknowledge *these* to be the Standard of *true Miracles*: And this is better, than to lay down any other *definition*, which we are never likely to agree in. Having said thus much, I proceed to what I propos'd.

And here, I believe, I need not observe, that God, the Fountain of all Being, can Communicate *Power* and *Knowledge* in what degrees He pleases, at the same time that He communicates *Being*; that He has done this, in several and different degrees, to those innumerable *Orders* of *created Beings*, that gradually descend from *Perfection* to the last degree of *Imperfection*; that, as we have infinite *Orders* of *Creatures* below us in *Power*, so we have numberless *Orders* of more *powerful* and *knowing* *Creatures* above us. Now, as *Reason* teaches us this, so *Revelation* assures us, that one *Order* of these *Creatures* above us, I mean the *Angels*, excel in *Strength*,

or *Power*, and *Knowledge*, i. e. that they are wonderfully *Powerful* above *us*, who are made lower than the *Angels*. That these *Spirits* were endow'd with this *Power* (so much above ours) at their *Creation*, we have no reason to doubt; and we are sure they were made thus, in order to be the *Ministers* of God's Will, to be his *Messengers* to Mankind, and perform his *Commands*, in and about this Earth which we inhabit; which supposes a *Knowledge* in them of the *Nature of Man*, and that part of the *Creation* especially *Man* is confin'd to. We are assur'd, that part of these *Glorious Creatures* had such an *Opinion* of their own *Power* and *Knowledge*, that they thought themselves a Match for God himself, exalted themselves against Him, and so were cast down from their *Glorious Habitation*, to dwell nearer Mankind. And since that, they are the *Powers of the Air*, under a *Chief Commander*, who is the *Prince of the Powers of the Air*. That these *Spirits* had an *inherent* or *innate Power* before their Fall of doing some *Works*, which you your self acknowledge to be truly *Miracles*, to me is past doubt: And I'm sure I may say, no one can prove that their *inherent Power*, or *Knowledge* is diminish'd since their Fall. [Why I think the *Reasons* that incline you to think otherwise insufficient, you will see by and by: At present I am only to represent this *Scheme* to you, and to shew there is nothing in it to the *prejudice of Religion*.] And for ought I see, you your self cannot help agreeing with me in this. You acknowledge a Man's walking upon the Water to be truly a *Miracle*, and a considerable one, more than once. This must be done, or, at least, it may be done, by means of some *Powerful Being*, supporting his Body so that it shall not sink. I say a less *Power* than *perfect Power* can do this, and you your self more than grant me the Point; for you grant an *Angel* or *Spirit* can do what, is evident



dent, requires a *greater Power* than this: For p. 190. of your *Essay*, you, in effect, acknowledge the *natural Powers* of *Angels* such as suffice to bear up a *Body*, and carry it through the *Air*, which (if we speak nicely) requires *greater Power* than to support a *Body* from sinking into the *Water*, because *Water* resists more than *Air*. Nay, p. 188. you acknowledge you know not but that *Spirits* may have *Force* and *Power* enough to bear up a huge *Mountain* (much heavier than the *Body* of a *Man*) in the *Air*. And, I say, if you acknowledge they can do these, you must grant they can support a *Humane Body*, so as that it shall not sink into the *Water*, and consequently can work a *Miracle*; except you are resolv'd to maintain, that the same *Work*, perform'd by the assistance of an *Angel* or *Spirit*, is not a *Miracle*, which, perform'd immediately by *God*, is: which I cannot think you mean. If you do, you are obliged to prove, that there is a manifest difference (with respect to the *Spectators*) between this *Work*, when done by the assistance of a *Spirit*, and the same *Work*, when done by the assistance of *God*. But, to return, what I would have granted is, that a *Spirit* may have an *inherent, natural Power* of doing *Works* of the same nature with those, your self, as well as I, account *Miraculous*; the same *Works*, you acknowledge *Miracles*, when done by *God* himself; and I think you are of my side in this. To proceed therefore, If these *Spirits* may have this *inherent Power*, we may easily know to what purposes that part of them that have rebelled against *God*, and have their *Habitation* in these lower *Regions*, will make use of it. They are full of *Rage* and *Malice* against the *Souls* of *Men*, and they and their *Prince* are combined in a design directly opposite to the design of *Almighty God*; This they are constantly carrying on, labouring to distract *Mankind* in the great *Concern* of *Religion*, to draw them from the  
Worship

Worship of one Supreme God; and to this end, we may be sure, they will employ all their *Power*, as well as all their *Cunning* and *Knowledge*. That *Almighty God* has taken away their *Power* since they were engag'd in this wicked design, no one can prove: Now my Opinion is, that He may permit them, by the instigation of their own Malice, to make use of this *Power* in opposition to *Himself*, and to *True Religion*, by showing forth some of those *Works* which we acknowledge to be *Miracles*, or doing some things which, with all examination, the World cannot distinguish from *Miracles*; which I acknowledge, with you, to be all one, with respect to the Spectators, or those who are to be the Judges of 'em. This is what I maintain, which I would not do, but that I am fully persuaded that, in case of Opposition or Contest between two Persons, (which is the only case we are concern'd about now) there may be so plain and evident a *distinction* made, that it shall not be a difficult matter for the World to judge, who acts by the Superior Power, or on which side the advantage lies. It is my Opinion, that this is effectually done, if there are *greater*, and *more Miracles* on one side than the other. But you absolutely deny all *difference* in *Miracles*, and often declare that the Topic of *greater* and *more Miracles*, is not to be insisted on. I wonder very much at it, and it looks as if you were resolv'd to maintain, at all adventures, that no Power less than God's, i. e. *Perfect Power*, can do any of these *Works* you acknowledge *Miracles*: And then indeed, I confess, they all require an equal Power.

But I must dissent from you, and beg leave, in pursuance of my design, to show these two things. 1<sup>st</sup>. That some *Miracles* are *greater* than others, and 2<sup>dly</sup>, That *many Miracles* give an advantage to the Person who is the Instrument of performing them, above him who works *not so many*. After which, I may safely conclude, that there  
can



can be no danger to *Religion* from God's permitting a wicked *Spirit* to work *Miracles*, because then I shall have shown that such a *distinction* may be made, that the World shall not be left in suspense, on which side to judge. And,

*First*, That there is a *distinction* between *Miracles*, as to their *Greatness*. Here give me leave to observe, that when you speak of the *Equality* of *Miracles*, you instance in *Creation*, which I cannot apprehend to be any thing to the purpose: For what if it is as *easy* to make an *Elephant* as a *Fly* (as you instance p. 31. I think it easier, if we speak with respect to any but perfect Power, and perfect Wisdom) but, I say, what if it is as *easy*? And what if it requires no less Power to make a *Butter-fly* than an *Army* of *Eagles*? (as you say, p. 212. or, an *Eel* than a *Dragon*, as p. 33. which I suppose true without Examination) how does it follow from thence, that it is as difficult to support a *Body* from sinking into the *Water*, as to make a *Fly*, or an *Eagle*? Which you name for *Miracles*. Or, how does it follow, that a *Power* that can change the *Figure* and *Motion* of inanimate Particles of *Water*, so as that it shall become *Wine*, or *Blood*, is also able to cure all *Diseases* in a moment, or to raise a dead *Body* to *Life* again? I do not see how, I confess. I observe farther, that you fall into this distinction of *greater* and *less* your self, p. 187. where you assure us, You account the turning *Water* into *Wine*, &c. a greater *Miracle*, than a *Mountain's* being supported in the *Air*, and carried two *Miles*; which I must think a *Miracle*, (as I observ'd before) whether done by a *Spirit*, or by *Almighty God*; because here is the supporting a weighty *Body* in the *Air*, which without the Interposition of some powerful Being, could not be supported in that yielding *Body*, and because our Lord instances himself in the removing of a

*Mountain*, as a *Miracle* to be perform'd by his Disciples, if they had Faith. *Matth.* 17. 20. 21. 21. But, to return to what I propos'd,

*First*, You cannot but acknowledge those *Miracles* are greater than others that require, or are a Sign of, a greater degree of Power than others. I instance in the supporting a huge Mountain in the *Air*, as a thing that requires greater Power than the supporting a humane Body from sinking into the *Water*, because *Air* yields to a heavy Body more than *Water*, and because that Body is heavier than the Body of a Man. There may be therefore a Power able to do the one, which yet may not be able to perform the other. Thus it is certainly a thing that requires more Power to put the *Air* 200 miles round into a violent motion, than the *Air* 2000 Miles round; and, tho' the Prince of the Powers of the *Air* may have Force enough, and Armies enow under him to effect the one, yet He may not, to effect the other. The Case is not very different, if we put *Water* instead of *Air*, the dissimilitude between 'em being not very great; and therefore I must think, that the turning a vast River, and all the Waters of *Aegypt* into Blood in a moment, requires more Power, than the turning a little Water; and that a Being that has Force enough, and active Spirits enow under him to effect this alteration of the Figure and Motion of the Particles of Water in a lesser Quantity, may not have Forces enow at his Command to effect it in a Quantity vastly greater. Thus, a Being that has Armies enow under him to bring up Ten thousand Frogs, may not have Power enough to bring up Ten millions (supposing so many in the Creation) and the doing this is evidently a Sign of more Force and Power, than the doing the other. Once more, I cannot but think that, in a Contest, it is a sign of greater Power to produce a Serpent that has more force and strength, than



than one that has *less*; and therefore, that the Production of a Serpent that has Power and Strength enough to overcome another is a sign of *greater Power*, than the production of one that has not Strength to resist it: This being a demonstration that there is a *Power* on one side that can give such *Strength* and *Power*, that the *Power* on the other side cannot resist it. And I wonder to see you deny these things, p. 32.

*Secondly*, Those *Works* I cannot but account *greater* than others, which require, and are a sign of, *more Knowledge* (which is a *Power*) as well as *Power*, properly so call'd. To put an Instrument in order that is compos'd of a great number of Wheels and Springs, requires *more Skill*, and *Knowledge*, and *Contrivance*, than to put one in order that is of a more simple, and uncompounded Make; and to put this *Machine perfectly* in order, when it is *all disorder'd*, is a Work of *greater Skill*, than to rectifie the disorder of one particular *Wheel* or *Spring* in it. Thus, to put the *Eye* perfectly in order, is more difficult than to put any other part that is not of so nice a disposition, and does not consist of so great a number of Organs, because it requires a more *extensive Knowledge*: and to put this *perfectly* in order when *ev'ry* little part of it is disorder'd, more difficult, upon the same account, than to rectifie the disorder of any *one Fibre*, or *Membrane*, that composes it: And a *Being* that may be *able* to do the one, may *not* be *able* to do the other. So, To put the *whole Body* in perfect order, when it is *all disorder'd*, is still more *difficult* than to rectifie the disorders of any *one Member* of it: And to put it all into such order again, after the Soul has left it, (as an Habitation wholly unfit for it to act in) that *ev'ry* the least Particle of it shall be in exact order and disposition, fit for all the Operations of *Life*, *Sense*, and *Motion*, is yet more *difficult*, because it requires a yet *greater* degree of

Sagacity and Knowledge. For, as I think, tho' all these are to be done *miraculously*, in the Case we are speaking of, yet they are to be done by a *Knowledge* that comprehends clearly the nature, disposition, and composition of *one* Member, or of the *whole* Body, the infinite number of Parts that make it up, what Avenues and Passages are to be open'd, what Nerves to be strengthen'd, what degree, and what determination of Motion is to be given to the Blood and Animal Spirits, and more things, necessary to such Operations, than we know, or can think of. I might give other Instances, but these are sufficient to shew what I mean.

*Thirdly*, Give me leave to reckon those *Miracles* amongst the *Miracles* that are *greater* than others, that seem more plainly to shew the *Lord* and *Governour* of Mankind *himself* present with a Person, than others do. Thus, in case of a contest, or opposition, I could not but think the *raising* the *Dead* to Life again, a *greater* Miracle than the being supported so as not to sink into the Water, or the alteration of the Motion and Figure of the Particles of Water, so as to make it Wine; not only, because it requires *more Knowledge and Power* than the others, but because the *Life* of a Man, and his continuance in this World, seems so much the peculiar Concern of the *Providence* and *Appointment* of *God*, with whom are the *Issues* of *Life* and *Death*, that I cannot think any Being else to have any thing to do with it. There is a great difference between altering the Particles of an inanimate Body, and having Power of the *Life* and *Death* of reasonable Creatures; and therefore, tho' I see no absurdity in holding that *Spirits* may do that, or may have power to support a Body from sinking; yet, I think it unreasonable to suppose that, when *God* has took Men out of this World, any of *them* should have power enough to determine and bring it about, that they should have  
another.



another abode, and time of continuance in this World. I hope what I have said is sufficient to shew that one *Miracle* may properly be said to be *greater* than another.

2. The other thing I was to speak of, is this, that *many* Miracles give the Person who works 'em a great advantage: which you absolutely deny. And yet You your self acknowledge, p. 34. that the *working many Miracles will naturally gain greater Authority*. [thus we may guess it was amongst the Jews from their Question, *Joh. 7. 31. When Christ shall come, will He do more Miracles than this Man?*] And You give very good Reasons why it is so, *because more People are concern'd, and come to the knowledge of 'em, more have the privilege of being Eye-witnesses to 'em, and because they who have seen more, are better assur'd that their Senses were not impos'd upon, than if they had seen but one; and after you have said but thus much, I wonder you can say that this Topick will hardly bear insisting upon, nay, that it adds no advantage to a Person. For by this You give me leave your self to say,*

*First, That supposing the many wonderful Works this Person performs, to be of the same kind, yet the number of 'em does encrease my Satisfaction, and serve to assure me, that He does not impose upon the World, or take advantage of a lucky Event, or happy Opportunity; but really does the Works that He pretends to do. Therefore I must give this Person the advantage over one, who does not give the World so much assurance of that; and since I cannot have so much satisfaction in this Point from one, as from more Miracles, I cannot but think many Miracles, and especially, an uninterrupted Series of Miracles, a reasonable addition to the Authority of any Person, and therefore worth insisting on: And if these many Miracles, tho' of the same kind, differ in any considerable Circumstance, they will be of greater weight with me, and give me*  
greater:

greater assurance of what I desire to be certain of. For, *suppose You or I* (as You go on, p. 35.) *should have seen our Child rais'd from the Dead*; if this was presently after we suppos'd the Breath to be gone out of his Body, I hardly think we should have had as great assurance that the Person who did this had a *power* of raising the Dead, as if we should see him afterwards restore Life to one now carrying out to Burial, or to one after He had lain Three days in his Grave. But to this I must add, that *many* Miracles, when they are not of the *same* sort, are still a greater *advantage* to the Person who performs them, as they give the World a yet greater assurance that He has a power of working *True Miracles*. If a Person should pretend He is sent from God, and for Proof of this should appeal to the *Miracles* He performs, and should only repeat one Work, only walk upon Water, or cure one particular Distemper, &c. I ask, whether there would not be more cause of Suspicion that he had some Art or Trick no Man else knew of, than if the World should see him not only do those, but turn Water into Wine, cure all manner of Diseases, cast out Devils, raise the Dead, and, on ev'ry occasion, exert a Power above our Conception? And will not this, and ought it not to be an *advantage* on his side? And why may not this be insisted on, if others have not given so great and abundant assurance, as this Person, that they had truly a power to do *Miracles*? To proceed,

*Secondly*, A great *number* of *Miracles*, of *different* sorts and kinds, do, in my Opinion, demonstrate a more *comprehensive*, and *extensive* Power, and therefore a *greater*, which you often deny. It cannot be prov'd, as I know of, that He that can, with the Assistance of any *Being*, walk upon the Water, or turn Water into Wine, can also, with the Assistance of that same *Being*, cure all Diseases, feed Thousands with a few Loaves, or raise the Dead; because it cannot



not be shown, that a *Power* that can do the first of these, can also do them all. Now in a contest, or opposition, certainly that Person must be said to act by the *superiour Power*, who not only does Works of the same sort with those the other Person performs, but Miracles of all other sorts, on ev'ry occasion; because He plainly acts by a *more extensive Power, i. e. a greater*. But, what is so plain, that I wonder to find You say nothing to it is, what I shall observe,

*Thirdly*, That in a *Contest* or *Opposition* between two Persons, *more Miracles* do plainly shew a *greater power* on one side than on the other. If one Person goes on to work a *Miracle*, which the other will not be perswaded to attempt, or cannot perform when He does attempt it, this is a plain demonstration that there is a *Power* on that side, that either performs what the other cannot, or else is of force enough to hinder the other in what He designs, and attempts to do; *i. e.* it is a demonstration of a *greater power* on one side than of the other. Thus, if in a contest one Person turns *Dust into Lice*, and the other attempts it, and cannot do it, tho' He has done a *Miracle* before in opposition to him, yet He must yield; for the Question is not whether it is not as easie for him to turn *Dust into Lice*, as to do what He has done before (which you often insinuate, p. 60. 265, &c.) but whether it does not argue a *greater power* on one side than the other, when one has the *continuance* of the power of working Miracles, when the other attempts it, and cannot do it? Does not this show a *Power* on one side able to controul and hinder that on the other, *i. e. a greater*? I believe I need not add any more, so shall conclude this Argument with observing, that I cannot think, unless our *Blessed Lord* had been of opinion that there was a great difference between *Himself*, and all others that had ever appear'd in the World, with respect to the *greatness* and *number*

ber of his *Miracles*, He would have said, as He does, *Jo. 15. 24. If I had not done amongst them the Works that no Man has done, they had not had Sin, i. e. so great an aggravation of their Infidelity.*

And now having shown (I'm sure to my own entire satisfaction, till I hear somewhat more against it than I have yet) that there is a difference in *Miracles*, as to their *Gratness*, and that *many Miracles* give a Person an *advantage* over one who works but *one*, or a *few*; I may the more securely reassume the Subject that engag'd me to prove this, and the more safely maintain, that God may permit *wicked Spirits* to work *Miracles*, in opposition to Himself, and the Truth; since He can make this apparent difference between the Person on whose part He acts, and the other: and because He *can*, therefore I'm sure He *will*. You ask, I remember, in one place, (*p. 211.*) who told me so? I answer, Reason assures me of it, as it assures me, that God will not suffer the World to be distracted in so concerning a Matter, or to be tempted above what it is able, that He is obliged by his Justice and Goodness to set such plain marks on the side He espouses, as that any considering Person may presently see which it is.

These are the *Foundations*, and the main *Strokes* of that *Scheme* I thought fit to represent to You, in order to shew that You had not so much reason to reject it, and cry out against it, as You imagine; which is what I shall endeavour to do, by proving, as I propos'd,

*Secondly*, That this *Scheme* may be maintain'd without the least prejudice to *true Religion*: and this, I think, will clearly appear, if we apply what has been said to *Moses*, and *Jesus Christ*, whom we both acknowledge to be sent of God.

And 1<sup>st</sup>. Suppose the *Magicians*, who were sent for by *Pharaoh*, did work *true Miracles* (or *Works* that could not be



be distinguish'd from *True Miracles*) by the assistance of the *Devil*, what ill Consequence follows from hence, if *Moses* plainly demonstrates that He acts by a *Power* superiour to that by which they act, as, I think, He does? What if *their Rods* are, to all appearance, turn'd into *Serpents* as well as *His*? Yet, since *His* *Serpent* shows more *Strength and Power* than theirs, it shows more *Power* in the *Cause* that produced it, the others not having *Power* to resist it. But You acknowledge no Sign of Superiority in this Victory obtain'd over the other *Serpents* (*p. 32, &c.*) therefore, I ask, why was this Circumstance added by *God* to the *Miracle of Moses*? And, till I have a better Answer, I must think it was, to make a difference between *Moses* whom *He* sent, and the *Magicians* who oppos'd him; and, if so, it gives *him* an apparent advantage over 'em. You your self give me leave to suppose that *Moses* turn'd a vast *Quantity* of *Water* into *Blood*, more than the *Magicians*, (*p. 30.*) and brought up more *Frogs* than they. I have before spoke my Mind, that in a Contest this ought to be look'd on as an Argument of a Superior Power assisting *him*, &c. (*Supr p. 8.*) But the main thing is yet behind. Suppose *they* did work *Miracles* in opposition to *Moses*, yet if *Moses* works more than they can, here is a sufficient demonstration that the *Power* that sent *Him* is superiour to any *Power* that dares oppose *Him*. Here is a continuance of the *Power* of working *Miracles*, to *Him*, when the *Magicians* attempt and cannot go on. And which of the *Spectators* would not presently see (as I have observ'd before) that there was a *Power* on his side, that could either do what the *Power* on the other side could not, or could hinder that *Power* from working when it pleas'd, i.e. that the greater *Power* was on his side? As themselves were forc'd to acknowledge, when they see themselves controul'd and stopp'd. But

You say, p. 264. *That their attempting to go on, is a certain Token that they were ignorant of any Power they had to do Miracles.* I think, that if they had not in times before done very strange things by their *Enchantments*, and things which the *Spectators* could not distinguish from *True Miracles*, *Pharaoh* would never have call'd 'em to oppose *Moses*, which it is plain He did. And the *Scripture-History* says, what they did, they did by their *Enchantments*. But You give your reason, *Had they known what they could do, they might also have known what they could not do, and, consequently, never attempted it.* But, I think, that they might be of Opinion they should perform this as well as what they had already done, without knowing exactly how far the Power of that Being, whose *Ministers* they were, extended; and they might know how far their Power extended, and yet not know (nay, the *Devil* himself might not know) exactly when a *Superiour Being* would think fit to interpose so as to hinder their working. And, methinks, this Scheme gives a more natural and obvious Interpretation to the Words of *Moses*, than that You affix to 'em, by not allowing *Moses* any Superiority over the *Magicians*, but what arises from their own Acknowledgment, *i. e.* none at all, if they had chanc'd to have been as harden'd and refractory as their Master. I cannot think the *Historian* had the least Suspicion that they did their *Miracles* by the Power of *God*; because it is so remarkable a Circumstance of the Story, that He would not have omitted it, but would have recorded it in plainer Terms than, *This is the Finger of God*, which ev'ry Body is presently led to interpret as their Acknowledgment, that *Moses* did act by a Power *superiour* to their Power, and that they could oppose him no longer. It is no Matter, whether the turning *Dust into Lice* be as easie as the other *Miracles* or no (which  
You



You insist on so often) Their being controul'd and stop'd, demonstrated to 'em there was a *Power Superiour* to that by which they acted. Upon the whole, then, I cannot see how this Opinion does the least prejudice to the Cause of *Moses*.

It is easie to shew the same with respect to our *Blessed Lord*, and his *Disciples*. What if *Simon Magus* did perform *things* not to be distinguish'd by the People from *true Miracles*, as I think very probable, because *all the People of Samaria gave heed to Him from the least to the greatest, saying, this Man is the great POWER of God*, Acts 8. But what if he did? If the Providence of God orders it so, that *St Philip* is brought to the same place, and there shews forth such *Miracles and Signs*, as *Simon* cannot pretend to equal: If there is so apparent a *difference* between 'em, that *Simon* himself (as well as all the *Samaritans*) confesses a *greater Power* with *Philip*, than *He* can pretend to, where is the great harm to *Religion* from this Supposition? And though *He* could work some *Miracles* before, yet seeing *greater and more* wrought by *Philip*, this might make him so far a *Christian* as to own a *greater Power* on *Philip's* side, and to desire to partake of that Power, which *He* could not do, without pretending to believe, as we find in the same Chapter, *Act. 8. 29*. And, suppose *False Christs* may do great Signs and Wonders, I see no ill consequence to *Christianity* from hence; for, at the same time, I am sure, as I can be of anything, that there shall be so great a *difference* in the *Miracles* wrought, in the *quality and greatness*, and the *number* of 'em, that *the Elect*, the true serious *Christian*, cannot be at a loss to determine on which side *God* is. Nor can an instance be brought of any who have actually oppos'd *Christ*, but that, supposing they have wrought *Miracles*, this *difference* is very apparent, when you put 'em in the Scale against

gainst a *long series of Miracles* of all kinds, wrought by a Power uncontroul'd; and, at last, the *Person* who wrought 'em, rais'd from the dead. This, I think, *Reason* tells me I may believe; and it is agreeable to the natural and obvious Sense of that Text, *Matth. 24. 24.* which you are forced to give up as an *obscure* place, because you maintain the contrary; which looks not well. For I must observe, that these words are as plain, as any that say our *Blessed Lord* himself did *Miracles*, that the expressions are the same that are us'd to signify our *Lord's Miracles*, and those of his *Apostles*, as will appear to any who considers *Acts 8. 13. Joh. 20. 30. Acts 2. 22. Mark 16. 20. Acts 14. 3. Heb. 2. 4.* which You your self quote, p. 155. &c. But You reject this interpretation, *because it consists not with the other Scriptures, nor with Christ's purpose, nor is reasonable*, p. 218. which is charge enough indeed, if it could be made out. But I see no such thing from what You have already said. No *other Scriptures* say, God will never permit any such thing; I suppose the *Scriptures* you mean, are those You quote, to show that *Christ's Miracles* were design'd to prove *Him* sent from God; and that they most certainly do, though *true Miracles* should be wrought in opposition to *Him*. How it is *inconsistent with Christ's Purpose*, I know not. He plainly designs only to give 'em warning, that such a thing would be, that the *Devil* would exert all his Force against *Him*, that they might not be surpriz'd when it happen'd. But you say it is *unreasonable*, and indeed I grant it is, as you represent it; for this runs through your whole Representation of it, that these *False Christs* shall work the *same Miracles* (p. 181.) and as great *Miracles* to overthrow the *Christian Faith*, as *Christ and his Apostles* wrought to plant it (p. 183. 211. &c.)

But



But it is far otherwise. Though You acknowledge no *difference* in *Miracles*, yet, I think, in representing the Sense of others, You should in Justice have remembered *they* did; and that they who interpret this Text in a different manner from You, do maintain, that there will be a great *difference* in the *greatness*, and *number* of the *Miracles*, sufficient to determine any Serious Person on which side the *Superiour Power* acts. It is their Opinion, that the *Miracles* of *Christ* are to be consider'd as an uninterrupted *Series* of Wonders, wrought by a Person who never was controul'd or hinder'd, or so much as oppos'd, who had not any one mark of God's displeasure upon him, who himself was rais'd from the dead, and sent down a visible Power from above, upon his Followers: And with these considerations, as they will prefer him to any, who has ever appear'd in the World yet, so they doubt not of a great and apparent *Victory* (in case of opposition) over any *worker* of *Miracles*, who shall ever appear hereafter. But You endeavour to represent this interpretation as absurd, by bringing an example of a Person, who gives the same warning to his Followers, with respect to *Reason*, that you say *others* suppose our *Lord* to give, with respect to *Miracles*. But, I pray, If (for example) the Doctrine taught, be, *that Men ought to pay Religious Worship only to God, and not to Saints or Angels*: Can there be *equal reason* for, and against this, as you suppose? And would it be absurd for any to forewarn his Scholars, that though this Doctrine is so *reasonable*, yet there would arise some, who should offer *Arguments* against it, and deceive a great many, and themselves, if they did not seriously look to the bottom of the matter? Otherwise than this, we would not, any more than you, make our *Blessed Lord* argue; and no otherwise do we interpret his words in this place. We make him not say, as You do, that

that *False Christs* should work the same course of *Miracles* as He had done, but that they should, in opposition to Him, work *some Miracles*; and we say, He forewarns them of this, that they may be prepar'd to examine them when they appear, and declares they shall not be such as *can deceive the Elect*, i. e. that there shall be such a difference, that any serious Christian shall see that *God is on his side*. But You say, according to this, *a Man may part with his Christianity, upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it false, as fairly as He took it up upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it true*, p. 196. Still You suppose an equality in the case of *Miracles*, on both sides, which they do not, who maintain the Opinion You condemn. And I say, as to *Miracles*, I embrac'd the Christian Religion, upon the score of a *long uninterrupted Series of great Miracles*, therefore I cannot part with it, on the score of a *few Miracles*, or *Miracles* that do not shew so great a Power. This, I think, a just way of proceeding: But supposing an equality in the *Miracles on both sides* (which I do not grant by any means) a serious considering Person would not let this influence him so far as to part with his *Christianity*. For *Miracles* are not the only Argument for it (as You acknowledge, p. 199.) nor ought ever to be consider'd so, by any who write on that Subject: and therefore, I say, since I believe *Jesus Christ was the Son of God*, not only because He did these *Miracles*, but because He exactly fulfill'd all the former *Prophecies* which the Jews had been taught to understand of their *Messiah*, because He taught so excellent a *Doctrine*, and because He was so perfectly *good and holy* Himself; I cannot part with this belief, *only* on the score of *Miracles*. But this I only say upon supposition. You see, by what I have said, why it is, that I cannot think this *Scheme inconsistent* with



with Religion, or, imagine any prejudice from it to the Miracles of Moses and Christ, or the Pretences and Doctrines established upon 'em.

III. Give me leave now to examine those *Reasons* upon which you have rejected other *Schemes*, and advanced your own, and to answer some *Questions* You ask upon this Subject.

The first Reason I meet with is, because *to work a Miracle is to unsettle the course of nature; now no Power less than that of God can unsettle that establish'd course of nature, which no Power less than his could settle and establish*, p. 8. 10. If you could plainly demonstrate this, the whole dispute must be at an end: But I cannot think it can ever be made out, that a Being that has not that *Wisdom* and *Power* that was required to settle ev'ry thing, Earth, Water, Air, Sun, Moon, Stars, Animals, &c. in that *Order* and *Disposition*, and *exact regularity* in which they are, may not (for all this) have *Power* enough to support a Body from sinking, in the *Water*, or the *Air*, or *Power* enough to alter the particles of *Water* so as to make it *Wine*: nor can it, I believe, be ever shown, that the *Angels* who were created to be *God's Ministers*, were not created with *Power* and *Understanding* enough to do some such things; which cannot properly be call'd, *unsettling the course of Nature*, any more than some of the *Operations* of Men, perform'd by the visible *Application* of corporeal means. But, p. 10. You give two Reasons (which You often insist upon afterwards.)

1<sup>st</sup>. *Because this would be for God to leave the Laws of his Creation at the Will and Mercy of created beings, and to have Rivals, and Cheques of his Will and Empire.* But I cannot think so. The good Beings will make use of this Power only by his *Command*: and the bad ones cannot without his

his *Permission*. He has 'em under his eye, and can controul 'em when he sees fit, as he can do Man in the Exercise of any Powers he has given him. This is not to believe *they can be wrought by ev'ry wanton and malicious Spirit*, whenever they please, as you mean, p. 209.

2. Another reason You give, p. 10. is, *because there could no use be made of Miracles if any but God could work 'em*. Thus also p. 38. p. 91. and other Places, *i. e.* they would not be an Argument of a *divine Power* present with the worker. But, there is no need they should all be certain Arguments of *perfect Power*; I have said before what is sufficient to show that there may be such a difference in the *Miracles* (in case of an opposition which we are now considering) that it may not be difficult to determine on which side *Almighty God* is. *Good Spirits* never interpose to do any thing wonderful within our view, but by *God's Command and Appointment*; and when He orders them to interpose, He will take care that they shall come off with Victory; and how that may be, I have shewn before.

Besides, how often soever you call it *begging the Question*, I cannot forbear thinking that I can judge on whose side *God* is by the Doctrine taught. For I know as well as I know any thing, that *God* will not work a *Miracle* for one who teaches a Doctrine, in any respect, unworthy of him; and I know the *Devil* will not do any thing to establish the Authority of a Person, who teaches true Reason in the Matter of Religion: And therefore when *Miracles* are wrought for the one, I'm sure *God* is on that side; when for the other, I'm sure they are not from Him. But of this somewhat more by and by. At present I observe, that the Scheme I defend, does not leave us without reasonable grounds, upon which we may judge on whose side *Almighty God* acts, and which is his Seal:  
For



For tho the *Devil's Seal* may resemble *His*, yet we do not say, it shall be exactly the *same*, as you suppose, p. 12. but that there shall be a manifest *difference*. But, suppose any Person should have the Use of the *same Seal* with his *Prince*, yet I could never believe the *Prince* himself had set it, if I should see it set to a *Writing* that exhorts me to a Rebellion against this *same Prince*. The Tendency of that *Writing* would be an infallible Rule to go by in that Matter.

To your *Questions* about the *Miracles* of *Moses*, and the *Magicians*, p. 89. 90. I answer. To the first, *Whether the Finger of God was not as much seen in Moses's turning the Rod into a Serpent, &c. as in turning the Dust into Lice?* That, tho there was an *Advantage* on *Moses's* side, (in my opinion) in the whole procedure, yet it did not appear so manifestly and undeniably, before *Moses turn'd the Dust into Lice*, and the *Magicians* attempted it, and were not able to perform it; I say, it did not appear so undeniably, that the *Finger of God was with Moses*, or, that the *Power* by which *He* acted was superior to the *Power* that oppos'd his Demands. This was the thing in dispute, and this appear'd most manifestly, when they, who were brought forth to confront him, were controul'd and hinder'd from doing what *He* did. To the second, *Whether the Magicians did not see the Finger of God as much in their own Works, as in the first Works of Moses?* I answer: The *Magicians* do not say, they saw the *Finger of God* in those *first Works* of *Moses*; tho they could not but see an *Advantage* on his side. But when they attempted to do what *He* did, and could not; then it is, and not till then, that they are so thoroughly convinc'd, that they cannot help acknowledging the *Superior Power* on his side. To the third; *Whether the Magicians would have attempted the fourth Miracle, if they had*  
D thought

thought the Finger of God more necessary to the performing of that, than to the performing the former? I answer, No body says, they did think so, as I know of; but I say, they attempted the *Fourth Miracle*, because they thought they should succeed as they had done before; and because they did not know, that a Power superiour to theirs would interpose, and hinder the Power which acted by them from working. To the Fourth: *Whether therefore, when they acknowledg'd the Finger of God in the works of Moses, they did not also effectually acknowledge that the same Power had wrought by themselves, those three great works?* I answer, That it does not appear, that they acknowledg'd any thing, but that a greater Power commission'd Moses, than that they acted by; and this was so evident, they could not deny it. These, and, I think, all the other *Questions* You ask on the Subject of *Miracles*, I have in effect answer'd, as well as I could, in what I have laid down before.

I shall only beg your patience a little longer, while I mention two or three other things in which I cannot but dissent from You, till I have farther satisfaction.

1<sup>st</sup>, You say over and over again, it is down-right begging the question (p. 169, &c.) to consider the *Doctrine* before the *Miracles*, and to judge of the *Miracles* by the *Doctrine*. This I know not how to agree to. For, tho' in the case of *Jesus Christ*, I do make the same consequence you do (p. 168.) that his *Doctrine* is true, because it was prov'd, establish'd, and confirm'd by *Miracles*, yet I do this, as I consider that series of *Miracles*, of all sorts, He wrought by a power uncontroul'd, and unoppos'd, and last of all his own *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, *sending of the Holy Spirit*. For I argue, that it is not imaginable, that God would permit any Person to go on with so unrestrain'd a power, and put no mark of disgrace upon him, but many of his favour, if this Person taught a  
*Doctrine*



Doctrin*e* *contrary*, in any respect, to his Nature and Attributes. I say, tho' I can reason this way, and very much to my satisfaction, in the Case of *Jesus Christ*, yet I could not, in the case of a Person who work'd *one*, or a few *Miracles*. But then, I am fully perswaded the Method you condemn is reasonable. To *beg the question*, is to take the thing for granted that is to be prov'd. Now, as I take it, the thing to be prov'd is, *that Jesus was sent of God*. Now, I desire to know, if the *being* and *attributes* of God are not suppos'd to be known from *Reason* before any *Revelation*? I desire to know, if I must not have as much proof that this Person comes from a *holy Being*, as that He comes from a *powerful one*? And, tho' *His* teaching never so *reasonable* a Doctrin*e* will not prove He comes from God, and has an *extraordinary* Commission from *Him* to teach it; yet *His* teaching an *unreasonable* Doctrin*e*, his making God an Encourager of Vice, or Discourager of Virtue, is a greater evidence that he *cannot* come from God, than the doing of a *Miracle* can be that He does: to me, I mean, who think that a *power less* than God's may do some of those things we acknowledge *Miracles*, and who cannot separate *holiness* from the Notion of God. Suppose our Lord cur'd the *Paralytic*, to show He had an extraordinary Commission to *forgive sins* (as You say, p. 169.) If this pretence of his had had any absurdity in it, no *Miracle* could have prov'd it true: and this instance proves nothing contrary to what I am defending, *viz.* That the excellent and reasonable precepts of *Religion* and *Morality* our Lord taught, are so necessary an argument, that if He had wanted it, we could not acknowledge him *sent of God*. But you say, at this rate *Miracles* would prove nothing that was doubtful or unknown before, p. 170. In the case before us, the thing to be prov'd is, that *Jesus is sent from God*, and this was *unknown* before. *Miracles* are one argument to prove this; but, if there is any thing in his Doctrin*e* *abjurd*, or

*contrary* to the *Notions* of God, *Reason* teaches us, and the matter before us supposes already in the World, nothing can prove it; and therefore we may, and ought to look into the *Doctrine* any Person teaches, who pretends He comes from God. And, tho' I find You differ from me, yet I cannot but think, that there was no *fundamental Error* in the *Pharisees*, in point of *Judgment*, but all down-right *Malice*. When they attributed our Lord's *Miracles* to the *Devil*, they seem to me to own, Our Lord wrought *true Miracles*: They could not but see the nature of the *Doctrine* He taught, and the *Holy Life* He led; yet they blasphemously asserted, He did them by the *help* of the *Devil*. You grant Your self, the *Pharisees* thought the *Devil* could do *Miracles*, and our Lord's answer does not lay *that* to their charge, as *their fundamental error*, as You do, p. 165. but rather supposes it true, and only lays before them the horrid, and groundless absurdity of making the *Devil* act against his own interest: so that He did in effect invite 'em to examine his *Doctrine* as well as his *Miracles*, in order to determine, whether He acted by the *Holy Spirit* of God, or the *Devil*, that *wicked Spirit*. Now, because the Persons You dissent from, are of opinion that the *Devil* can work a *Miracle*, therefore it is, they think, they must look to the *Doctrine*, and to the *Tendency* of it, before they can Judge, whether this *Miracle* was wrought by God or the *Devil*; and the design of the *Miracle*, done by the *Power* of God, is, not to prove, that the *Doctrine* is *worthy* of God, but that He is so much concern'd about it, as to send a Person in an *extraordinary* manner to teach it.

2. I cannot so well see the necessity there is for our *Blessed Lord* to declare his *Pretences* before He began to work *Miracles*; as You argue, p. 222. and 227. Indeed when



a Person has but *one*, or a *few Miracles* to perform, there may come into the Minds of Men a Suspicion, that He takes advantage of a lucky Event, or strange Accident, to improve it to the increase of his own Authority, unless He *declares* before-hand, what it is He pretends to. But when a Person has a *long, and continued course of Miracles of all sorts* to go through, there cannot possibly be such a suspicion in the Minds of Men.

Since our Lord therefore had so *long a Series of Works* to perform, and had all other Arguments necessary to prove him the *Messiah*, I see no Obligation upon him to *declare himself plainly the Messiah*, before He began. And, as there was no necessity for it; so I think it was what He solicitously avoided at first, and what He enjoin'd his Disciples to keep from divulging in the World, after He had done many *Miracles*. The Texts You produce, p. 227. do not prove it, and I could produce plain Texts that prove the contrary.

3. Nor can I see the Necessity of our *Blessed Lord's declaring before-hand that He would work Miracles* (as You argue, p. 263. 272.) for the reason before-given, because He had not *one or two Miracles* to work, but *many and great Miracles*, before the Eyes of all Examiners, sufficient to satisfy the World, beyond all doubt, that He did not take an Advantage of an Accident, or lucky Event, to encrease his own Authority. The Text You produce (*Joh. 6. 6.*) says only in one case, *that He knew before-hand what he should do*, not that He declared it: And this was remark'd by the *Historian*, not as an *advantageous Circumstance* of the *Miracle*, but only as He was giving some Account *why* our Lord ask'd Philip that Question, *Whence shall we buy Bread that these may eat?* Here I cannot but observe, that our Lord's commanding the sea into a Calm, may be insisted on to an Infidel as a *great Miracle*,

*Miracle*, (not only 'because a violent Storm cannot be suppos'd of it self, to sink in a moment, into a Calm, but) as the Work of a Person, who gave the utmost Evidence, that He did not take Advantages of lucky Events, and as a Work that is an Argument of a *greater Power* (as I think) than walking on the Water, or changing a small Quantity of it into Wine. Tho' You are not for insisting upon this, p. 142. Yet I cannot see why, under this Consideration, it should not be of great Account.

4. One thing more is, that I cannot think your Account of the Disciples *not dispossessing the Lunatick* (p. 274, &c.) right. You say, *they did not attempt it*, and (p. 275.) You say, the reason was, *because they found themselves distrustful of the Event*: And yet, You make 'em come to their Lord, and ask, *Why could not we cast out the Devil*, i.e. according to You, *Why did not we attempt it?* The Reason of which they very well knew themselves, had been their *Distrust*. According to this Account, they should rather ask, *Why had we such a Distrust as not to attempt it?* But then, in our Lord's Answer, *Unbelief* must not signifie this *Distrust*, as You say it plainly does.

But, It is time for me to release you. I am sorry to find my Thoughts, and the Thoughts of many serious Persons, so different from Yours on this Subject; but since they are so, I could not think it amiss to accept your Invitation, and represent 'em to you; and have done it, I hope, *in a manner becoming my self and You*. If they engage You to resume this Subject, and give it a farther Examination, the World will think it self, perhaps, obliged to me, for giving you this disturbance. If they appear to You not to deserve your regard, I shall still have this Satisfaction, that I design'd no Injury to You, and



and some Good to others. I assure You, it was not my Judgment only, that something ought to be said on this occasion, or, that what I have said is to the purpose. If I have mistook You in any thing, I am sure it is not wilfully; and I shall readily acknowledge my Error, as soon as I am inform'd of it. I have no more; only to beg of you to believe, that no one has a greater respect for you than I; and, that no one prays God more heartily to preserve You long a Blessing to these Parts. And so I take leave.

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**F I N I S.**

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**E R R A T A.**

**P**Age 11. l. 1. for *this World*, read *it*. Ib. l. 18. f. *its* R. *is*. P. 14. l. 8. R. *Greatness*.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses, which are arranged in two columns. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are written in a more formal, printed style. The list includes names such as "John Smith", "Mary Jones", and "Robert Brown", along with their respective addresses in various parts of the city.



